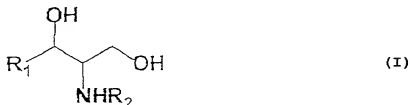


WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

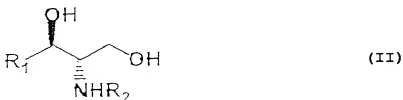
1. A clear aqueous ceramide composition comprising  
(A) 1.0 to 5.0% by weight, based on the total composition,  
of a ceramide represented by formula (I):



10 wherein  $\text{R}_1$  represents a hydrocarbon group having 9 to 17 carbon atoms; and  $\text{R}_2$  represents an acyl group having 2 to 30 carbon atoms which can contain a hydroxyl group,

(B) a long-chain fatty acid having 12 to 24 carbon atoms, (C) a nonionic surface active agent, and (D) water.

- 15 2. The clear aqueous ceramide composition according to claim 1, wherein said ceramide represented by formula (I) is an optically active ceramide of natural type represented by formula (II):



wherein  $\text{R}_1$  and  $\text{R}_2$  are as defined in claim 1.

- 25 3. The clear aqueous ceramide composition according

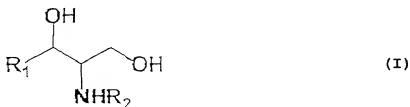
to claim 1, wherein said long-chain fatty acid is at least one of isostearic acid and oleic acid.

4. The clear aqueous ceramide composition according to claim 1, wherein said nonionic surface active agent is a polyoxyethylene hydrogenated castor oil.

5. The clear aqueous ceramide composition according to claim 1, which further comprises at least one compound selected from the group consisting of a sterol compound and a polyhydric alcohol.

6. The clear aqueous ceramide composition according to claim 5, wherein said sterol compound is cholesterol.

7. A method of preparing a clear aqueous composition comprising 1.0 to 5.0% by weight of a ceramide represented by formula (I):



wherein  $\text{R}_1$  represents a hydrocarbon group having 9 to 17 carbon atoms; and  $\text{R}_2$  represents an acyl group having 2 to 30 carbon atoms which can contain a hydroxyl group,

comprising adding water to a lipid composition comprising (A) said ceramide, (B) a long-chain fatty acid having 12 to 24

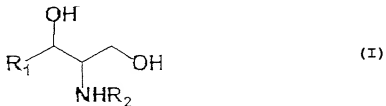
carbon atoms, and (C) a nonionic surface active agent.

8. A skin-care cosmetic comprising 0.01 to 100% by weight of the clear aqueous ceramide composition of claim 1.

9. A hair-care cosmetic comprising 0.01 to 50% by weight of the clear aqueous ceramide composition of claim 1.

10. A bath agent comprising 0.01 to 50% by weight of the clear aqueous ceramide composition of claim 1.

11. A lipid composition for preparing a clear aqueous ceramide composition, the lipid composition comprising (A) a ceramide represented by formula (I):



wherein  $\text{R}_1$  represents a hydrocarbon group having 9 to 17 carbon atoms; and  $\text{R}_2$  represents an acyl group having 2 to 30 carbon atoms which can contain a hydroxyl group,

(B) a long-chain fatty acid having 12 to 24 carbon atoms, and

(C) a nonionic surface active agent, wherein the weight ratio of component (A) to component (B) is from 20:1 to 1:3, and the weight ratio of component (A) to component (C) is from 1:1 to 1:10.